House Appropriations Committee OK's Funding to Strengthen New York's Role As Solar Energy Leader

Washington, DC - Continuing his ongoing efforts to establish New York as a national and international leader for solar energy research and development, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced he's secured the House Appropriations Committee's approval of $2.9 million for The Solar Energy Consortium (TSEC) and its partners. Hinchey, who is a member of the House Appropriations Committee, had the committee include the funds for TSEC and its partners as part of the Fiscal Year 2009 Energy and Water Appropriations bill and the Fiscal Year 2009 Financial Service Appropriations bill. The measures still have several legislative steps to go, but having the funds included in the original version of the bill is considered a critical step in the process. The funds may also face a challenge from President Bush who has said he opposes the inclusion of funding for such projects.

"The approval of these funds is a critical step forward in our efforts to firmly establish New York as a preeminent leader in solar energy research and development," Hinchey said. "Through the ongoing work of TSEC and its partners, I am confident that New York will soon be synonymous with solar energy and the extraordinary potential it holds for bringing America off its oil and fossil fuel addiction. There are still several steps in the legislative process, but having these funds inserted into the funding bills at this point is an absolutely critical step in our ultimate goal of delivering TSEC and its partners an additional $2.9 million."

Of the $2.9 million Hinchey secured from the House Appropriations Committee, $1.5 million of the funds Hinchey secured will be used for Prism Solar Technologies, Inc. -- the first major manufacturing partner with TSEC -- to expand in and begin manufacturing in Ulster County. The funds are a follow through on Hinchey's promise to establish the region as solar energy hub. Prism's partnership with TSEC is expected to create more than 400 new jobs in Ulster County over the next 4-5 years. Prism is a high-technology, research, manufacturing and marketing enterprise, formed in 2005 to manufacture and market a patented state-of-the-art photovoltaic technology expected to catalyze one of the already fastest-growing clean energy industries in the world. In Ulster County, the company will be developing and manufacturing proprietary holographic optical film technology (nearly 160 MW production capacity by the third year), as well as photovoltaic modules incorporating its Holographic Planar Concentrator (“HPC”) technology (nearly 20MW production capacity by the third year).

$900,000 of the funds Hinchey secured today will be used for TSEC's operational needs. Hinchey helped organize and create TSEC in upstate New York, which is a new industry-driven, non-profit organization that provides leadership, organization, resources, and support for the establishment of a major solar energy industry cluster in New York. TSEC is the first organization of its kind for the photovoltaic industry, encompassing research and development, manufacturing facilities, industry promotion and market development.

Congressman John Hall (D-NY), who has long been a strong support of renewable energy, also worked to secure some of the federal funding for TSEC.

In order to advance TSEC, Hinchey previously helped secure $1.476 million in federal funds to help bring companies such as Prism Solar Technologies into the consortium. The congressman also secured $3.2 million in federal funds for C9 Corporation to conduct solar research and development in conjunction with TSEC. Additionally, Hinchey helped convince Empire State Development to contribute a $1.5 million grant to attract solar energy companies to TSEC. Subsequently, the recently approved New York State budget includes $6.5 million for TSEC. Ulster County has also committed $200,000 to the consortium.

"By investing in The Solar Energy Consortium now, we are taking the steps necessary to create hundreds and then thousands of new jobs in upstate New York over the course of the next several years while ensuring that New York is front and center in the world of renewable energy," Hinchey said.

TSEC has been operational for one year. In addition to Prism Solar Technologies bringing more than 400 jobs to Ulster County, Globe Specialty Metals, a TSEC partner and manufacturer of solar grade silicon, is creating 500 jobs in Niagara Falls, New York. Both of these businesses, as well as several others, have benefited from TSEC's leadership including Precision Flow Technologies which has expanded its solar operation and created an additional 25 jobs at its facility in Saugerties. More than 1,000 jobs are in line to be created over the next four to five years as TSEC drives the solar energy revolution in New York State. TSEC has also partnered with six premier research universities across the state: Binghamton University, the City University of New York, Clarkson University, Cornell University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and The State University of New York at New Paltz.

In conjunction with TSEC's university partners, there are large and significant solar related demonstration projects underway from New York City to the Hudson Valley involving farms, government installations and hospitals. These projects are also staffed with talented volunteers from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Throughout its wide array of work, TSEC has partnered with various private manufacturers, including: Solar Summit; Brite Components; SK Enterprises; Terra Watt Power; Central Hudson; L3 Communications; Atlantis Energy; Precision Flow Technologies; Fala Technologies, and various solar panel installers. The consortium is also in talks with other manufacturers as well regarding future investments in the Hudson Valley.

Finally, $500,000 that Hinchey secured will go to TSEC for one of its partners to develop a low-cost method for producing silicone film needed for solar products. The funds will be used to evaluate a prototype process to manufacture less expensive solar photovoltaic cells in a process that uses fewer raw materials, thus delivering on TSEC's principal mission of halving the costs of photovoltaic systems and increasing their efficiency.